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THE VITAL STUDY OF LITERATURE.

SELF-COMPLACENT illiteracy in educated adults is supposed to be an incurable disease. "I don't like poetry," the sagacious man will tell you, is quite as final a verdict as "I don't like young onions." To be sure, it is useless to argue about tastes. Yet one may appeal from Philip drunk to Philip sober. If your arrogant damner of art can be brought to realize that his anathemas hurt none but himself, he may try what a few beatitudes, devoutly uttered, might do to improve the situation. If he comes back with a disagreeable impression from the paradise of so many great souls, whom he hypocritically admits to be greater than himself, may it not be the bad company he has traveled with, or his absent-minded absorption, or his undue haste, that are to blame? or the green goggles he habitually wore to prevent his seeing things rose-colored, like happy young folk? or perhaps that he never visited the country at all, and wrongs his own judgment and healthy power of perception by the promulgation of hearsay?

How many an adult of literary disposition and aptitude for appreciating the noblest works of poetic art will admit that he never, since he left school, read any work on English literature but Taine's "History" in Van Laun's translation? And what other handbook should he have read? If he picked up any by the pedagogues and critics of international repute, an intuition, self-preservative and tyrannous, made him quickly lay it down. And well for him that he obeyed. It might have extinguished what flame of æsthetic fire yet flickered in his secret soul.

The truth about the matter is, literature cannot be taught. It is not a science. Nor is it an art. Literature is a collective name for masterpieces of literary art. Such are objects of enjoyment, not of study. The teaching required is a personal preparation for enjoyment. The understanding of a poem, as a piece of writing, versifying, thinking, feeling, is not identical with the enjoyment of it, and its *raison d'être* is not the former but the latter. The latter does im-

ply the former; and yet is it not true that the former (the understanding) is not to be got so much from a vivisection of the poem, sure to become an autopsy before the student knows it, as from the proper education of the student in certain elementary arts and sciences, or more probably by his lessons in life's school of experience? For one who gets a love of Milton's epic from parsing a speech of Satan, there are thousands who ever after secretly congratulate themselves that they do not write like Milton. Fortunately for them, his fame is such that they may safely neglect to read his works. Doré will suffice—and the school memories of syntactic involution! Besides, well-bred people never discuss the classics—only writings warranted ephemeral and interesting! It is not that adults lack time, "habits of study," or capacity for continuous attention, for self-compulsion. No. They cheerfully labor at their callings in and out of season. They will acquire a science or an art as a personal accomplishment. But then a definite use is in view: an increase of power, a display of personal excellence. Why is literature so rarely the diversion of the busy man's leisure hours—his opiate, his stimulant, his food of the spirit? Those of us who know what literature has been to leaders of men in the past; how, directly or indirectly, from it the preserver and transmitter of our racial achievement, all of character almost and conduct derive; those of us who have, not merely professionally as teachers, critics, litterateurs, but personally as men and women, drunk freely of those waters of life and been refreshed, intoxicated—nay, renewed—as though indeed they were love philters drawn from the fount of eternal youth—how can we help lamenting that so many about us refuse to drink with us to their health and our happiness? How can we not wish to do something to cure their self-complacent, willful illiteracy? And who is to blame for the disease, if such it be? Who, if not the teacher, the critic, the litterateur? Their sins of commission and their sins of omission are indeed grievous. What was done at school for the adult of to-day? What were his text-books? Is their memory fragrant? And since he has been out of school what

book about English literature has been put into his hands which, vitally interesting in its conception and execution, showed to him the value of its subject; made him realize his need of acquaintance with the best that has been written? Ah! the truth is, it is just here that he has been irritated. The best? Who was to decide about that? Dead men, or men as good as dead, or himself? And so he concluded that because he could not accept traditional estimates he was a peculiar man, probably blessedly so; one, at all events, that didn't care for poetry, except perhaps the "Psalm of Life," and of course Shakspeare in theory.

Literature is for life, not life for literature. This a man is quite clear about who hasn't a professorial chair in a classic hall. I have to live—earn my living, fulfill my human obligations, and enjoy myself. If you can show me that the study requisite for the enjoyment of literature will help me to enjoy myself, to make myself enjoyable; that literature is capable of liberating new energies in me, communicating to me an else impossible ecstasy; fit me, indeed, for greater efficiency as son, lover, husband, father—nay, as laborer, journeyman, manufacturer, citizen, because quickening me as man in hitherto undreamed of ways—then it is quite probable that I shall make some effort to verify my dogma (that I do not like poetry), and see whether perhaps I am not mistaken after all. But be it understood, I must be shown all this, not told about it. I must be given at least a vicarious experience for provisional faith, till right knowledge can be got for myself with the personal experience of what literature, with proper self-preparation, can do for me. I read only the newspaper, or the cheap magazine made up of illustrations; occasionally a novel that is forced upon me by the clamors of my friends and neighbors, more in self-defense than out of curiosity. At school, at college, I never really received pleasure from any literature. I heard a great deal of praise of what I did not like. It has, however, occurred to me that with the advent of maturer years I might perhaps be able to agree with some of those then apparently extravagant estimates. Masterpieces, naturally enough, make demands

of me proportional to their greatness. I am prepared for that. Nothing worth having is got without effort. You can't climb a mountain as easily as you can fall to the earth from a balloon. What is the line of least resistance for me, the easiest and quickest ascent? I want a guidebook; not an omniscient "Murray," but a plain, practical "Baedeker." Yes, but then my mind is not wholly made up. The "Baedeker" is dry reading. Besides, I can't make my own itinerary, and who is my "Cook?"

Well, there are books of travel, the experiences and opinions of men who have seen for themselves. Ah, yes, the essayists! Of course, if they do not merely repeat the traditions of the elders, their authority is that of private judgment. If only they are honest with me, however, and allow me to understand what manner of men they are, I can make needful allowance for difference of point of view. But the "ipse dixit" of an Arnold is not likely to satisfy me. The methods of the wine taster applied to landscape or poetry are likely to arouse good-humored mirth at a critic's expense, even if he be in his own right a poet of distinction. "Is Niagara great? Call to mind that sunrise you saw in the Alps. Do they affect you similarly? If so, Niagara, though so recent an addition to the list of nature's wonders, is classic!" Besides, a man's loves I cannot, as a man of the world, help calling into question. There is the craze and the fad. Men want a thing not because it is good (though it may be so), but for the reason that others want it; they are the sheep. Men want a thing to be singular, just because others don't want it; they are the goats. So I, who love neither sheep nor goats, who am a man, or try to be one, and pity the sheepish craze and despise the capricious fad, cannot help being doubtful of literary exhorters, special pleaders, apologetes, even when I am confident they are not exploiters of good subjects, although it be true enough that whatever a living man praises must have contributed something to his life. Because the essayist had a confined subject, I have little chance for ascertaining how much of craze or fad there is in his estimate.

As for a man's hates, they are less reliable than his loves. What he loves he may be quite right about, nine times out of ten; what he hates he is sure to be wrong in, ten times out of nine. There is ignorance, prejudice, mistaken theory of its object's inconsistency with what he loves, incapacity of temper; yes, there is so much that will account for the hatred more easily than the vice or defect of the hated that, as a man of the world, I pay little heed to polemics, diatribe, denunciation. Let Swinburne talk of Byron's "dirty, draggletail drab of a muse," and I will laugh at Swinburne, even though I should never read Byron.

I turn again to the "Manuals of Literature." They will give me Pisgah-sights of the promised land. Alas! these handbooks turn out upon inspection to be not manuals of literature at all, though in their way erudite and meritorious. They are histories of literary production rather than histories of literature. They show how certain times were marked by the making of certain sorts of works in prose or verse. They show how the intellectual history of the nation can be learned by a careful scrutiny of these works in chronological order. Or our handbooks are biographical dictionaries of authors arranged in order of birth. I am shown how the men, being what they were (literary gossip), wrote certain works (symptoms); or, *vice versa*, gossip was wrong; by their fruits ye shall know them, the knowledge of the dead wood being the reason for tasting the preserved fruit, rather than appetite or gormandize. Or our handbooks are scrupulous studies of the development of literary forms—how, for instance, the drama came to be what it was in Shakspeare's hands, and therefore how it can or can't become this or that in the future; as though we should study the bottles, their origin and destiny, rather than drink the good wines. Or our handbooks are attempts to show by structural and stylistic criticism that there never really were any literary masterpieces; that men of genius are, however, alive to-day who doubtless could, and would but for lack of time, create substitutes for the discredited classics!

More probably our handbooks are all of these things at

once. Better, surely, for my purposes would have been the old-fashioned cemetery, where the epitaphs on dead authors' monuments were strictly anonymous, and a glimpse of the dry bones (called "beauties") given through a crack in each tomb. At least, such manuals suggested wholesome meditations on the vanity of fame.

The truth is, I, the unpedantical ordinary man, want vital criticism based on principles for which the justification is in me. It is I, the consumer, that am to be considered, not the producer. It is not Milton's fame that is to be fostered, but my life that is to be made more abundant. What can I (not you, O pedant, but I) get from such and such masterpieces? That is the question I want answered. What are they really about, those masterpieces? What do I need to know, in what mood must I be, to enjoy them? Quick, what attitude must I take toward them? for if I expect a funeral oration, a jest will affect me as unseemly. Don't tell me what those masterpieces are not, but what they are. Please don't compile a list of works I needn't read, telling me why I needn't or oughtn't to; but a descriptive catalogue of works which, if I love my soul, I must read. Which will be likely to liberate energy? which to produce ecstasy? Which will conduct my passions innocuously out of reality into the safe world of day-dream and vision? which excite me, save me from lethargy, paralysis, coma? Which will produce that quiet felicity, that reasonless jubilation for which there are no words; that panic at the presence of the divine? Ah! and while you do all this, or part of this, for me—making allowance for varieties of temperament, for difference of age, prescribing the favorable conditions—I must be entertained. My informer, to be trustworthy when his report is "of beauty," must make me believe he has blood in his veins like myself, not ink or midnight oil; solid flesh under sensitive skin, not paper pulp bound in cloth, calf, sheep, or morocco. In plain words, he must know whereof he speaks, and love it; know me and love me, who am to listen; know how to speak, and love to speak. If not, let him be silent. He is a thief, with de-

signs on my pocketbook, and I should be foolish indeed were I to lend him mine ears.

As for the principles governing the selection of subjects for presentation and judicious yet enthusiastic praise, shall they be esoteric, the secrets of academic hierophants; shall they be always substantiated only by references to the "lost Vedas?" Must they not, if they are to win my provisional confidence, be such as I can verify in myself and my world of men? principles of large application, axiomatic, or at least corollaries to theorems which, upon some reflection, common sense adorns with a cheerful Q. E. D.? For whether literature be or be not the criticism of life, life most assuredly is the criticism of literature. I will not live in a tomb, not even a Pharaoh's of the most famous dynasty, though a pyramid commanding the attention of the entire tourist world. I prefer my hovel of mud-plastered logs, my children about my knees, and my wife laughing at their nonsensical prattle and mischievous pranks. It is in my living human nature and that of my fellows that the data for the critic's judgments must be found. Only such a handbook as does this, and declares itself frankly, can help me to recant and admit that under certain conditions I do love, should, could, or at least would love poetry.

But what are, in the opinion of the writer of this paper, these principles, and where are they to be studied? Manifestly at the book shop, the news stand, the office of the public library. Observe how mankind selects among books of contemporary authorship, for which no ancient fame imposes artificial reverence. Every one has noticed that the book of which but a few years ago, perhaps, several hundred thousand copies were sold is never to-day in demand. No one speaks of it; no one insists that you *must* read it. Everybody seems to have forgotten that it was once on every table, in every mouth. How is this? My bookseller tells me that more recent books have taken the popular fancy. So I discover at once the *law of death*. Other things being equal, the newest novel is the best. Old books are good not because of their age, but in spite of it. Their survival

is a proof that new books are not their equals in some important respects; for only if the old gives what the new cannot supply does it continue to find readers. The greater the output of novels the higher the mortality rate. A work of fiction which in these days of excessive production and publication retains a respectable body of readers is not without peculiar merit. Then I understand why the classics are probably great. If they are not now mere fossils stored in glass cases of scholarly museums, if they are really living creatures still, great and wonderful must be, indeed, in them the spirit of life.

But what is it that causes certain books to retain attention even when novelty is worn off? Why can they successfully compete with each annual generation begotten and born and reared to commercial importance expressly for the lucrative diversion of the public? Why is it that as a rule the public preserves just those books that were not written for its sake? Is it that, after all, the public is deeper, truer, sincerer than it seems? that what is not deep, true, and sincere in it is essentially capricious? that what therefore only satisfies the peculiar craving of to-day cloys, palls—nay, nauseates—on the morrow? And that some of the books written from a necessity to write may have come from the deep, true, and sincere in their authors, and therefore appeal to what is permanent in man, and obtain not the loud hysterical applause, but the praise of the still small voice which speaks in divers accents, but always to the same purpose—the best good of what is best in man?

The fact, then, is that a novel (taking the most alive of literary species as our instance) subserves many uses as an article of commerce quite distinct from its value as a work of art. It is a patch of color on the shelf or table; a paper-weight for perfumed billet-doux; if not too heavy, something to hold in the hand in lieu of a fan; a symbol of leisure and gilded ennui; an excuse for a bookplate and the display of a purchased coat of arms; an economical holiday gift; a subject for cultured chitchat; an occasion for the display of the nil-admirari spirit; something to recommend, like a fa-

vorite drug, to an acquaintance in proof of sincere good will; a means of enforcing Shakspeare's maxim, "Never a lender, but a borrower be!" These uses (and we are too civilized, urbane, and genial to deny their importance) are not literary uses of books. They may increase the demand for the publisher's wares—nay, affect the supply thereof—but they have little to do with the *law of selection* perpetually at work, the *law of death*. The illiterate often fancy that only defunct books are called classics as only the departed are canonized. But the truth is that only living books deserve and usually obtain the coveted designation, as only those men who live in the hearts of mankind as an inspiration are the saints to whom churches are dedicated and for whom asylums and hospitals are named. But why, then, does the novel fresh from the press often obtain a reading in preference to the tried and tested predecessor? Is it that, like Emerson, we are always on the lookout for a great man, and suspect that some hero's heart is beating under every little boy's tight-buttoned waistcoat? I think not. Rather is it to satisfy our curiosity and give us a sense of being up to date. Now note that a book can do this only once in one season. If a book does this and this only, or nothing else peculiarly well, it is consigned to oblivion. That is the death warrant of most publications.

Or a book gives me an unnatural excitement, a thrill, an extraordinary experience. In daily life I know always what to expect. I am therefore thankful for the suspense, the agony, the surprise. Besides, the dime museum of monstrosities gives me, as an after effect, a profound satisfaction with myself, the normal man, leading a normal life in which premises lead to conclusion, causes imply consequences on a planet where no ironic or freakish fate pulls the wires for the production of ingenious coincidences. If a book does this and this only, or nothing else peculiarly well, it will be soon superseded, because a sensation is relatively easy to produce, and there are many who wield the pen for a livelihood.

Or a book mirrors some phase of me to myself—exactly

my present thoughts, my present feelings. I am in print. Really, then, I must be of public interest. My vanity is nourished with tidbits. But alas for this sycophant of a book, I am fickle! Just because it flatters me to-day, it will seem tedious, superficial, insipid next year. Unless I have ceased to grow, I shall soon have found its garment of praise a misfit. If, then, a book reflects the features of my opinion, the complexion of my mood, and has won favor on that account, doing me no nobler service, its author may charge me with ingratitude; yet I shall soon hold his work in derision, or smile indulgently at best on its disappointed pretenses to further consideration.

But maybe it does more than this: it champions some cause to which I am wedded, and I love him for my bride's sake. It promotes my vested interests and has a clear title to a commission. It inculcates my dogma of social salvation as an active proselyter, subtly didactic, persuasive, an incarnate homily, and I disburse the price of the book as gladly as I contribute to the support of foreign missionaries or pay my assessment toward a political campaign fund. But note: Many will find themselves called to preach lucratively, and the talent required for respectable success as pedagogue or advocate is by no means uncommon. The very fact that I purchase this book, recommend it to my friends—nay, present an entire edition of it to such as are likely converts—will make it worth somebody's while to supersede my defender and spreader of the faith.

Or finally a book gives me a gallery of caricatures. All the people I meet are there. It furnishes me whimsical names wherewith I may designate them behind their backs. My vocabulary of urbane abuse is appreciably enlarged. In other words my gossip-passion is gratified—it leads me to believe that I know my neighbor so much better than he knows me. If a book does this and this only, and nothing else peculiarly well, it may live for a time. The cartoonist, however, is born anew in every generation. Surely I shall find my children preferring another book, and only yawning respectfully when I expatiate on its truth, its humor, its wit,

its wisdom. Gossip stales. The affectations and mannerisms of one age are not those of another. Our own seem charming, or at all events excusable, but who will condone those of other times? Local color, so called, has its dangers. It may be too local. Besides, it will not be gossip any more when the folk of whom it tells are dead! Unless, therefore, these likenesses have independent value as portraits, who will admit them to his gallery, even should it be explained to him that they were sat for by the eminent maternal great uncle, or the ladylike paternal great aunt of his next-door neighbor?

Who so bold or so ignorant as to deny that a large share in the "success" of any novel is due to novelty, surprise, flattery, doctrinal message, and hitting off people? Yet surely these attributes and powers altogether never secured longevity for a book, and certainly not what is facetiously termed immortality. In judging of literature my handbook must, therefore, be careful to exclude all books contemporary or of the past, which have no better claims to consideration. But how shall we arrive at some positive principles of selection? Examine the works that have lived and compare them with works, contemporary to them, that have perished? Yes. Verify, however, your conclusions by the psychology of readers—readers for pleasure, æsthetic and vital profit—yourself if you choose, the victim of your vivisections; but let it be yourself as reader, not as professional assenter or dissenter, as rattler of dead bones, collector of curios, or as intellectual prestidigitator and moral contortionist. If the examination is made patiently, without prejudice, fear, or favor, something like the following principles will be finally set forth as a critical working hypothesis:

Characteristics Promoting Literary Longevity.—First, the stuff, subject, idea must be thoroughly mastered, understood, grasped. If not, every Saturn breeds his Jove. The work advertises the stuff, subject, and idea, and ere long it will find another student who can present his truer view as attractively.

Secondly, the composition of the elements or parts of the

stuff, subject, or idea must be significant, interesting, lovely, beautiful, or sublime.

These two attributes of a literary work are prior to the actual writing—belong to the mental and passionate, not to the verbal, poem.

Thirdly, the construction of the written work, its plan, plot, argument, scheme, must be such that, however complex, it shows certain grand simple lines which secure a sense of unity for it, a pleasure to the reader in its contemplation as a whole. The interest must be continuous, not diverted or dispersed. The center of gravity must be safely within the base of the structure. And this, because it will be best remembered when its details are forgotten. It will hold its own in memory, be cherished so, spoken of, and purposely recalled. Perfect construction would imply that every character, incident, descriptive touch, digression of sentiment or passion, should be directly contributory to the idea, plan, plot, argument, or scheme of the whole.

Fourthly, the style of the book that is to live long must be such as yields a characteristic delight. Mere transparency is no merit, nor opaqueness for the matter of that, either. Individuality, appropriateness to subject, mood, structure of the work, charms not exhausted at the first perusal, reserve force, riches stowed underground to reward delving, violets under wayside hedges to which vague fragrance draws the leisurely passer-by; all significant of lavish love, of exuberant creative energy. For such style contributes to survival because it tantalizes in memory, cries for a rereading and obtains it sooner or later. Strange how Carlyle's idiosyncratic dialect adds to the greatness of "Sartor Resartus" and detracts from a history of the French Revolution! Yet, not strange. In the first case the style suits the theme; in the second case we are not so sure that it does.

The works of literary art that have come down to us with the greatest fame possess these four characteristics all in some degree, or if some one is conspicuously absent then the lack is made up for by luck, and the others are conspicuously present. Yet these four principles will not be found al-

together sufficient to explain the selection that has taken place in the past or to serve as a criterion of contemporary literature.

Fifthly, in the progress of mankind certain moral changes take place. What was once foible is now vice. To give direct offense to me morally is to render me æsthetically insensible. Pain neutralizes pleasure. Or the change of custom and manner is such that antiquarian research is requisite for intelligent appreciation. Then, whatever its other merits, it becomes literature exclusively for professional or amateur antiquarians. So, a Hamlet is to-day more to us than an Othello, though the latter masterwork is perhaps the greater of the two structurally, and in the other three respects its equal. Jealousy is no longer, in its extreme manifestation, sympathetic to us. We are for Iago, with all his villainy, rather than for the Moor in his brutal violence. So also a Flaubert elaborately produces a historic novel, "Salamambo;" and, attempting the recreation of the past in its singularity and obsolete detail, runs the risk of not recreating his cultured reader, which was incontestably his first duty.

Who shall predict the course of human progress? There are occasional revivals. History repeats itself? True. Yet certain steps are taken finally for the great majority of readers. Therefore certain works must suffer partial or total neglect. What will it avail, for instance, to praise composition, construction, style of a play by Terence which takes for granted the innocence of what is to us monstrous, and requires admiring sympathy for a criminal in his very crime? But this is not just to Terence! Who cares for Terence? It is not just to me, the living man, to recommend that fundamentally indecent play as a work of beauty. True, the morality and the beauty are distinct, but I, the living reader, am not built on the compartment plan—I cannot cease to be the moral man while I am the æsthete. Justice to the living, and oblivion to the dead! Only those works of the dead that live and have a right to live shall be part of our educational curriculum. Such will be our principle of criticism in this respect.

Yet clearly here we find ourselves ill prepared to administer the law to contemporary works. We are much too blind to our vanities, affectations, singularities, prejudices to resent them unless grossly obtruded. How much of our beloved Browning, Ibsen, Meredith, Hugo, Balzac, will perish on this count which is else justifiable? How much will cease to be read simply because the ship of culture must at all cost be lightened, even if treasures go overboard? Yet what cause for pride when masterpieces can thus be sacrificed! The seas are ever smoother, the ship is not in peril. No, it means that so much that is excellent has been since produced. So much! What a grand suggestion of the vitality of the race! Genius, like the sun, darts rays into planetless void—reckless, for it needs not reckon. “Bring forth weight and measure in a year of dearth,” cries the inspired Blake.

Sixthly, there is an adventitious value—usually the creation of humanity, not consciously at all events of the author. We have read something so long into a work, that now we read it out of it. How long shall we continue to do so? That is the question. Forever, doubtless, if there is any reasonable excuse for so doing. What makes us love Don Quixote? Its interest as a burlesque? Hardly. A good burlesque, in so far as it slays its enemy, commits suicide. What is a burlesque without the popularity of its victim? Does it charm, as a story, by sheer interest in the happenings of the human agents as persons: Don Quixote of the sorrowful countenance, or even Sancho of the paunch? Hardly. Ah! but as a symbolic expression of the two parts of man, the idealistic element, the materialistic element, the brave, loyal love of principle so usually blind to facts and incapable of learning from painful experience; the cowardly, sensual love of self, shrewd, gifted with mother wit, but needing sorely elevation by constant commerce with the nobler element: how as an externalization of our spiritual life, as our own self-knowledge writ large—ah! how it does appeal to us, how its “echoes roll from soul to soul!” passing far beyond the bookish circle, filling the great round world!

Yet, who could have foreseen all this? Cervantes in the first part *meant* to kill a craze, in the second to kill a hero imprudently left alive for the use of others!

Our canons of criticism then (1) grasp of stuff, (2) composition, (3) construction, (4) style, (5) modernity, (6) symbolic suggestiveness, are not all applicable with equal ease or certainty. The best care will not avoid errors.

Our manual is to care nothing for historic, biographic, traditional estimates; to set down everything according to its possession in greater or less degree of these attributes conducive to literary longevity. Yet shall not the compiler of our handbook dare not merely to pass over in silence a Butler's "Hudibras," a Young's "Night Thoughts," the rhymed romances of Byron, but, on the other hand, attempt a bold advertisement of certain forgotten masterpieces that died not by demerit, for lack of the qualities that endear when known, but by the ill chance which failed to accord them a reasonable publicity? Assuredly our descriptive catalogue of great works will need supersession, and shortly, too, by a better and wiser one; but will it not be something to have served for a day or two the best interest of culture? Is it not glory enough to provoke emulation, to compel into existence those that will be more powerful than we? This, the reward of all noble literary failure, is the reward for all noble, vital criticism, however brief its terms.

But, it may be objected, a handbook of literature on the lines suggested is only for the adult? The schoolboy, the youth at college, needs what? To be inoculated with a hatred of literature? Yet why impose upon the young? Besides, one cannot really do so. One can only make of them adults who look back at their text-book maker angrily, as the schoolroom tyrant who succeeded in spoiling some part of their golden age.

If the six principles here set down as an analysis of the attributes which tend to secure the survival of literature because, adapting them to what is permanent, or fairly so, in human nature, and which, therefore, govern the natural selection in books; if these six principles be found reasonably

correct; if the survival is in the main that of the fittest; if works that show the six above attributes, or a goodly number of them, to a remarkable degree, ought to be regarded as worthy of advertisement, because probably fit for revival, the mere victims of minor accidents—then surely a manual of English literature for adults needs to be written on such lines and manuals for school and college, remembering to allow for age and temperament; *descriptive catalogues* that shall quicken the desire to read, understand, and enjoy. And is it mere Quixotism to break a lance in such a cause? Is it mad optimism to believe that when such works, successful after repeated failure, perhaps, have come into general use the race of educated illiterates will become so well-nigh extinct as to justify the preservation of some specimens in every well-supplied zoölogical collection?

WILLIAM NORMAN GUTHRIE.